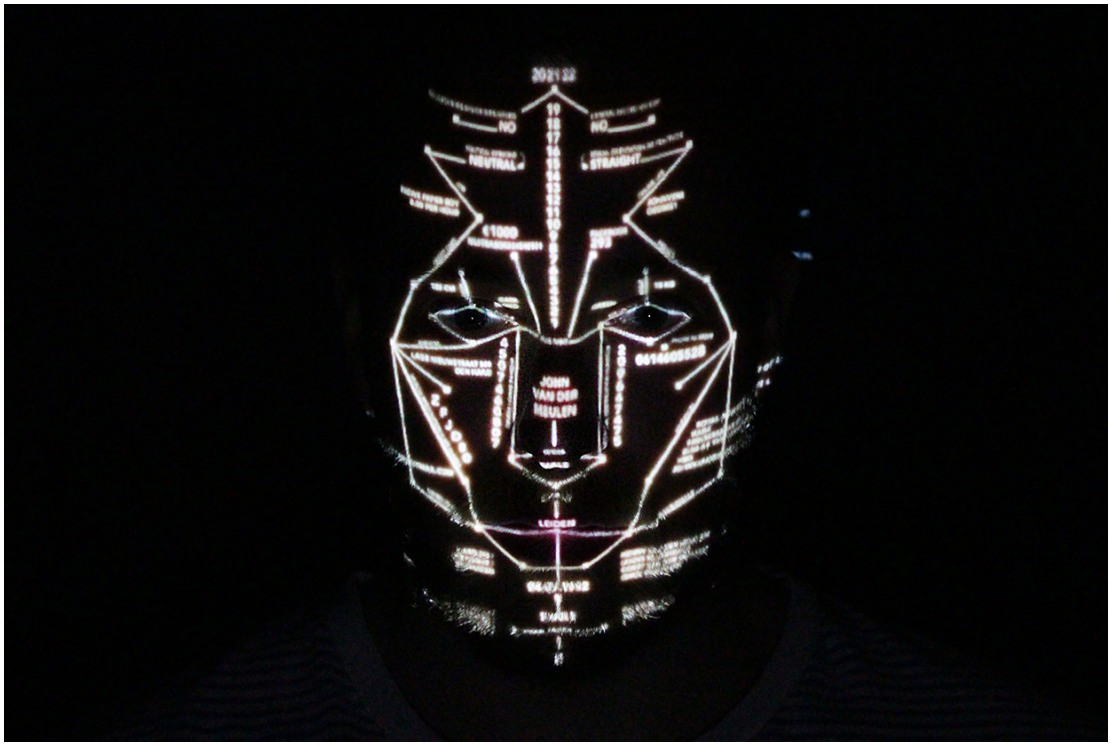
Culture of Control

Jorinde Seijdel

Editorial – October 12, 2015



Dattoo by KABK students Christina Yarashevich and Janne van Hooff is a digital mask that provides anonymity through obfuscation.

The theme *Culture of Control*, which *Open!* is working on in close collaboration with Stroom Den Haag, is a necessary and logical extension of a particular line of research conducted by *Open* throughout the years. A brief look back:

The first issue of *Open*, on which I worked as editor-in-chief, appeared (still in printed form) in 2004 and had as its theme and title, *(In)Security* *[www.onlineopen.org/in-security]*. In that editorial, I wrote: *Within today's public domain, the call for more protection, supervision and care dominates on all fronts. The individual and the community are demanding maximum security for the public space and for themselves, and ever more control over the other. There seems to be a veritable obsession with security.* The issue explored this obsession from the vantage points of architecture, art, philosophy and politics. It discussed global and local fears, occupation, surveillance, power, control and (in)security, as well as activist and cultural strategies for opposing this. All sorts of things had happened on the world stage in those years: 9 / 11 (2001) and the invasion of Iraq by America and other Western countries (20 March 2003). In the Netherlands, we witnessed the murders of the right-wing populist politician Pim Fortuyn (6 May 2002) and the film director Theo van Gogh (2 November 2004).

In 2010, an issue of *Open* was devoted to the loss of (our sense of) privacy *[www.onlineopen.org/beyond-privacy]*, seen in light of the political events of previous years, but also in relation to the rise of the Web 2.0 and social networks. The focus was not so much on deploring the loss of privacy, but taking the present situation of 'post-privacy' for what it was and trying to gain insight into what was on the horizon in terms of new

subjectivities and power constructions. From that editorial:

In the globalized network cultures, visibility, transparency, accessibility and connectivity are what count. These values are at odds with the idea of privacy as 'secluded from the rest'. Does this imply that 'everyone belongs to everyone else' to an increasing extent, as in Huxley's dystopic Brave New World *(1932)? Or, these many years after* The Fall of Public Man *(Richard Sennett, 1974) are we experiencing 'the fall of private man' – from which we could then conclude that the public-private antithesis has lost its force as a signifier of meaning? Are alternative subjectivities and rights emerging that are considered more important in the twenty-first century? Are new strategies and tactics being mobilized to safeguard personal autonomy and to escape forms of institutional biopower?*

Spurred on by WikiLeaks (in 2010, WikiLeaks publically disclosed the so-called *Collateral Murder* video and tens of thousands of documents on the war in Afghanistan, among other things), *Open* continued its investigation a year later with an issue on transparency and secrecy *[www.onlineopen.org/transparancy]*. From the editorial: *This issue... examines transparency as an ideology, the ideal of the free flow of information versus the fight over access to information and the intrinsic connection between publicity and secrecy. Among other things, the issue also discussed the extent to which transparency contains within it aspects of concealment and control.*

The present research theme, *Culture of Control*, continues along this vein. It critically discusses how the primacy of control and security has further developed in recent years – partly under the pressures of a credit crisis, terrorism, revolutions and hordes of refugees – and how it is manifested in public and urban space, in our communities and individual lives. What are our new fears or the new instruments and mechanisms of control? The theme deals with security and control in today's urban environment, but also with the implications of technology and the digital sphere, and their relation to art and aesthetics. For example, in *From Biopolitics to Mindpolitics: Nudging in Safety and Security Management*, law philosophers Marc Schuilenburg and Rik Peeters discuss how the 'neoliberal program seeks to create neither "a disciplinary society" nor a "society of control", but instead a society that cultivates and optimises differences by using "new techniques of environmental technology or environmental psychology".' In *Aesthetics of the Secret*, against the background of the revelations of former NSA contractor Edward Snowden, Clare Birchall discusses secrets as subject to and the subject of radical politics rather than regulation. She looks at the secret not only as it figures in current affairs but also in artworks by Trevor Paglen and Jill Magid. Michael Seeman, the author of *Digital Tailspin. Ten Rules for the Internet After Snowden* *[www.onlineopen.org/digital-tailspin]*, describes in his new essay, *The Kontrollverlust of the Nation State and The Rise of the Platforms*, how the nation states are losing control over their citizens, while digital platforms like Facebook and Google are increasingly getting a grip on them.

In the coming months, these essays will be supplemented with more writings and artists' contributions by curator Francien van Westrenen, photographer Elian Somers and architect / reseacher Abla Bahrawy, among others.

The Culture of Control project at Stroom Den Haag runs from 3 October to 13 December 2015.

Contributions

- Michael Seemann, *The Kontrollverlust of the Nation-State and the Rise of the Platforms* *[www.onlineopen.org/the-kontrollverlust-of-the-nation-state-and-the-rise-of-the-platforms]*
- Marc Schuilenburg & Rik Peeters, *From Biopolitics to Mindpolitics* *[www.onlineopen.org/from-biopolitics-to-mindpolitics]*
- Clare Birchall, *Aesthetics of the Secret* *[www.onlineopen.org/aesthetics-of-the-secret]*
- Elian Somers, One and Another State of Yello *[www.onlineopen.org/from-the-monument]*
- Abla elBahrawy, *The Formula* *[www.onlineopen.org/the-formula]*

Jorinde Seijdel is an independent writer, editor and lecturer on subjects concerning art and media in our changing society and the public sphere. She is editor-in-chief of *Open! Platform for Art, Culture & the Public Domain* (formerly known as *Open. Cahier on Art & the Public Domain*). In 2010 she published *De waarde van de amateur* [The Value of the Amateur] (Fonds BKVB, Amsterdam), about the rise of the amateur in digital culture and the notion of amateurism in contemporary art and culture. Currently, she is theory tutor at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie and Head of the Studium Generale Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam. With Open!, she is a partner of the Dutch Art Institute MA Art Praxis in Arnhem.

With thanks to: Stroom Den Haag and its curator Francien van Westrenen for their support.; Translation Dutch-English: Jane Bemont

Crosslinks

(In)Security: www.onlineopen.org/in-security
Beyond Privacy: www.onlineopen.org/beyond-privacy
Digital Tailspin : www.onlineopen.org/digital-tailspin
The Kontrollverlust of the Nation-State and the Rise of the Platforms: www.onlineopen.org/the-kontrollverlust-of-the-nation-state-and-the-rise-of-the-platforms
From Biopolitics to Mindpolitics: www.onlineopen.org/from-biopolitics-to-mindpolitics
Aesthetics of the Secret: www.onlineopen.org/aesthetics-of-the-secret
One and Another State of Yellow: www.onlineopen.org/from-the-monument
The Formula: www.onlineopen.org/the-formula
Transparancy: www.onlineopen.org/transparancy

Tags

Aesthetics, Control, Media Society, Urban Space

This text was downloaded on November 7, 2026 from
Open! Platform for Art, Culture & the Public Domain
www.onlineopen.org/culture-of-control